

In Legnano, courses to prepare for a civil wedding

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There is a premarital course that is free of charge and is optional to attend for those who decide not to get married in a church and prefer cohabitation or a civil wedding. The course consists of five sessions, from spring 2018, to help couples deal better with married life.

Since the 1980s, **fewer and fewer people have chosen to get married in church**, to the extent that civil weddings far outnumber religious weddings. Not only, the decision to cohabit is increasingly common. Our society has become secularised, multicultural and multi-faith. **According to the latest data from the Central Institute of Statistics, the fall in the number of weddings in Italy has been going on for over 40 years**, and its recent acceleration is due to the change in the make-up of the population, in terms of age. **In 2015, there were about 10.5 million young Italians aged between 16 and 34, more than 1.5 million fewer than in 2008.** The age of the people who get married has increased: on average, newlyweds are 35 years old, and the average duration of a marriage, in the event of separation, is 17 years.

In this situation, **the course provides a moment of reflection for couples that today choose a civil wedding** for their union, but it is also intended for couples looking to get married after previous experiences that are now over. Couples that are starting to live together, a decision based on a mutual commitment and on a life project, are also potential participants. **The course will try to overcome the exclusively idealistic view of marriage and of the couple** (as a guarantee of a future, happiness and fulfilment ...), a view that often foreshadows the failure of the project of a life together, when the first times of crisis arrive, which increase the participants' awareness of the reciprocal duties that marriage requires, also from a legal point of view.

Here below is a description of the programme organised by the association "Famiglia ti ascolto".

- Communication as a foundation of married life: emotions, conflicts, expectations. How important it is to know how to communicate in a relationship for a happy life together.
- The couple and the others: original families, children and extended families. Not only two life partners, but also family members and relatives: the extended and shared couples today.
- The marriage contract: from individuals to husband and wife. The property regimes for married and cohabiting couples. The marriage as a contract: reflections on the articles of the civil code.
- From individualism to mutual collaboration. The negotiation. Developing the theme of love in a couple: how to make compromises and to meet the needs of the other.
- Civil weddings: the humanist civil wedding, the sense of welcome in society.

"From my position, I perceive a need for reference points for couples getting ready for important changes, like creating a family," said **the Councillor for Social Services, Ilaria Ceroni**. "My role puts me in contact with fragility, and I see how widespread the need is to understand, to get to know certain responsibilities, also legal ones. It's something that goes beyond the Catholic idea of marriage." **Marina Gusmeri, on behalf of "Famiglia ti ascolto"**, recalled the history of the association ("in three years,

we've had over a hundred contacts, which correspond to as many families, relationships based on listening without judging, with the guarantee of discretion, free of charge"), and she expressed her satisfaction with the definition of the course. "It's added value for the town council. I'm not aware of others that provide a similar opportunity."

In summing up the reasons for the course, **Don Paolo Gessaga** said, "We need to know how to understand the evolution of the social contest, to seize a more widespread and marked psychological fragility than in the past, and to prepare people, so that they are aware of the decisions they are taking."

The sessions will be as dynamic as possible. There will be no lecturing, but a journey shared by the participants and the teachers. Professionals will also be present, such as psychologists, marriage counsellors, lawyers specialised in marriage law, family therapists and a public registrar.

"We will work with the experiences the participants bring with them. The idea is not to teach something but to reason together," said **the psychologist Javier Vinaras**.

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